



COOPERATION AND LINKS BETWEEN DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

—LUCIA BINDER*

Cooperation is one of the essential needs of our time—especially in the field of children's literature. The United Nations has declared 1990 as International Literacy Year and it has been pointed out at many conferences held in preparation of the Year that everyone has the "right to read." Only someone who grows up with books can really learn to read, and thus it is essential that children's books and easy-to-read materials be made available to all children.

The International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), which has been involved in literacy work and the provision of books for children throughout the world since its founding in 1953, has pre-

pared the following statement for the International Literacy Year 1990:

The International Board on Books for Young People urges the heads of governments throughout the world to make 1990, the International Literacy Year, the year that all children are given the opportunity to learn to read. It is time to stop talking about illiteracy and the crippling effect it has on our present and future, and to take action. Children and books must be brought together. No nation is strong if its children do not know its history and customs, cannot write about their experiences, and do not understand the basic principles of science and mathematics. Reading is the

*Dr. Lucia Binder is Director of the International Institute for Children's Literature and Reading Research in Vienna, Austria, and Editor of IBBY's Journal *BOOKBIRD*. She has taught children's literature in Austrian teacher training institutions at the University level. She is also former president of the Hans Christian Andersen Jury and of the International Jury of BIB.

only means by which a child can acquire informed opinions that are vital to the making of a mature, responsible adult capable of carrying on the work of the future. We encourage government at every level to give children the tools they need to become literate: School libraries, teachers, librarians and books should be our first priority. In today's world, to "raise up the child in the way he should grow," means "teach the child to read."

There are many countries, however, in which the adequate provision of books is a big problem—where not enough children's books are produced, the costs are too high and where there are few or no training facilities for authors and illustrators. It is therefore necessary to cooperate at the international level and to exchange not only experiences but books as well, in order to get to know each other better.

A principal that should not be ignored in international cooperation is the retention of cultural identity in literature. There are, for example, co-productions of picture books that are solely commercial and reveal no unique, national features. The pictures avoid printed street signs or shop signs and the characters are shown dressed in such a way that the setting could be anywhere.. I vividly remember an experience I had on a visit to a book fair in Turkey, where a volume of Turkish fairy tales was presented with illustrations of minarets—the small towers that appear on almost every corner of a Turkish city—that were completely wrong. Perplexed, I tried to get to the bottom of the matter and discovered that the book originated as a rather superficially made German edition and was subsequently translated and published in Turkey.

It is, therefore, vital that cooperation between developing and developed coun-

tries is not based merely on commercial interests but rather on understanding and respect for each other. Such a cooperation can be achieved if the producers and the mediators of children's books work together on the level of international organizations as well as on a personal and institutional level. The following are some concrete possibilities:

1. Cooperation through membership in the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY): IBBY is at present comprised of more than 50 national sections representing both developed and developing countries on all the continents. The purpose of the organization is the international exchange of information and experiences in the field of children's literature and the creation of common projects for the promotion of books and reading. By sponsoring international awards it gives authors and illustrators the opportunity of becoming known throughout the world.

The Hans Christian Andersen Awards are given by IBBY every two years to a living author and to an illustrator, whose complete works have made an important contribution to children's literature. It is the highest international distinction given to an author and illustrator of children's books. All IBBY countries are eligible to nominate candidates, and the winners are selected by an independent jury of children's literature specialists that are elected by IBBY's Executive Committee from proposals by the national sections.

Every two years, IBBY publishes its Honour List, which is a selection of outstanding, recently published children's books in each of the languages spoken in the country on the list: for writing, for illustration and for translation. The publication of the list includes information about

the books as well as about its creators and is distributed internationally. A travelling exhibition of the books contained on the Honour List can be made available to the national sections.

The IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award (formerly called Rising Sun Prize) has been given annually since 1988 to a group or an institution which by its outstanding activities is judged to have made a lasting contribution to the development of book promotion and reading programmes for children and young adults. The prize is sponsored by the Japanese newspaper company Asahi Shimbun and consists of a diploma and a sum of one million Japanese Yen which is given to encourage the winner to further its activities in the future. The jury consists of five members of the IBBY Executive Committee. India—as a new IBBY section—is heartily invited to submit suggestions for an Indian project.

Together with UNESCO, IBBY offers training facilities in developing countries in the form of a series of workshops that bring together children's literature professionals and encourages their cooperation at a national or regional level. So far, IBBY/UNESCO seminars have been held in San Jose, Costa Rica, in Nairobi, Kenya, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in Mexico and in Accra, Ghana. Further workshops/seminars are scheduled for Colombia and Mali.

The IBBY Documentation Centre of Books for disabled Young People was established at the Norwegian Institute of Special Education in 1985. The Centre sponsors international exhibits, seminars and bibliographic work. The "Books for Language Retarded Children" collection has been exhibited by IBBY worldwide.

IBBY holds biennial congresses in various member countries, which are attended by several hundred persons involved in

children's literature and in reading development. IBBY congresses have explored a wide variety of themes, such as "Children's Books and the New Media," "Children's Book Production and Distribution in Developing Countries," "The Book as an Instrument for the Education and for the Human Development of Children and Young People" etc.

IBBY's journal, BOOKBIRD, published jointly with the International Institute for Children's Literature and Reading Research in Vienna, is issued quarterly. BOOKBIRD covers numerous facets of International children's literature and includes news from IBBY and the IBBY national sections. India is invited to present its work, too.

2. Cooperation through contacts with other international institutions:

a. The International Institute for Children's Literature and Reading Research in Vienna, Austria, is an international study and documentation centre in the field of children's literature and reading. It maintains international contacts with institutions involved with children's literature throughout the world. Its professional library contains German and foreign-language professional literature on children's and young adult books and on reading research and reading education and serves as a centre for intercultural learning. In addition, the Institute administers a library of children's and young adult books and a collection of foreign children's literature and arranges many exhibitions.

The Vienna Institute holds annual conferences on major themes pertaining to work with children and literature and other professional meetings on problems of children's literature and reading education. It publishes the proceedings of its annual conferences, as well as BOOKBIRD, 1000 & 1 Buch, an Austrian professional periodical for work with children's literature, an informational leaflet for Austrian teacher

training institutions and booklists on various topics.

The International Institute regularly conducts investigations on the situation of reading, on reading interests and on methods of teaching reading. It attempts to mark research results widely accessible and applicable to direct practice with children's literature and has initiated a variety of reading promotion activities, such as an annual week of "Literature for Young Readers" and "Reading in the Park."

b. The International Youth Library in Munich, West Germany, systematically collects children's literature of all countries and languages in order to make it available for study and research. In addition to its library services, it serves as a place of exchange and encounter for the various groups and individuals in the field of children's literature.

For publishers it organizes an annual International Children's and Youth Book Exhibition displaying important new releases of the current year. An accompanying, annotated catalogue serves German and foreign publishers interested in translations and licensed editions. Another smaller exhibition is held at the annual Bologna Children's Book Fair including new books from all over the world selected on the basis of the great literary or artistic quality. It also organizes special exhibitions presenting the works of one or several countries or of a particular author or illustrator, as a rule also accompanied by a catalogue. Many of the IYL's exhibitions go on tour in Germany or internationally.

The IYL also stimulates international exchange through its stipend programme. It awards annually twelve scholarships of three months' duration to non-German children's literature specialists. Recipients are given the opportunity to work on projects of their own choice in addition to giving some of their time to work for the IYL.

c. The Biennale of Illustrations Bratislava (BIB), located in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia, is an international confrontation of illustrations for children and adolescents.

Every two years, since 1967, a selection of the best illustrations of children's books, created by artists from different countries in the time between two biennials is shown at the BIB. This is not a showing of national exhibits, but an exhibition of works by individual artists. An international jury biennially selects the winners of the BIB Grand Prix, five Golden Apples, ten Golden Plaques and four Honorary Diplomas. Each jury may also award Honorary Diplomas to publishing houses and other institutions for special merits in publishing high quality books on display. Many illustrators who have received BIB awards have attained increased international publicity and increased offers to illustrate new books.

An integral part of each BIB event are independent exhibitions presenting works by the previous BIB Grand Prix winner and by the latest winner of the Hans Christian Andersen Medal for Illustration. Since BIB '81, the award-winning works from the Noma Concours, which is organized by the UNESCO Cultural Centre in Tokyo for children's book illustrators from the developing countries, have been on display during the BIB events in Bratislava.

Also of special interest for India are the workshops for children's book illustrators from the developing countries, at which participants are given the opportunity to better acquaint themselves with the creative process of producing books for children, its graphic aspects and practical applications. These workshops are sponsored by UNESCO and illustrators from India may be recommended.

3. Cooperation through International Book Fairs:

International Book Fairs are now being

held in most parts of the world. Some of the main children's book fairs are held in Italy, Mexico and Egypt. The best known of these and the one with the longest tradition is probably the Bologna Children's Book Fair in Italy.

Since its beginnings, the Bologna Book Fair has not merely promoted marketing activity, but also documented the evolution of the books for children and youth. Within this aim, the Fair annually awards two prizes that document new illustrative and graphic tendencies in children's publishing. Winners of the "Fiera di Bologna" Graphic Prize are chosen by an international jury of graphic artists, while a jury of children chooses the winners of the "Critici in Erba"

Prize.

To all of these possibilities I would like to add the personal contacts and the co-operation among colleagues. The exchange of authors and illustrators, invitations to conferences and other professional meetings and so on can prove to be most valuable. Recently, Mrs. Surekha Panandiker of the Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children, New Delhi, was our guest in Austria and what she had to report about India and the work being done there in the field of children's literature was indeed of great interest to her Austrian audience. I hope that my visit here, too, would lead to increased contact in the future.

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he can also suggest imaginative changes in the presentation of the subject matter and suggest new illustrations and photographs to support the text. However, apart from correcting the science part of a text, any imaginative editor with some interest in science can perform the aforementioned tasks equally well. In fact, he may even prove better because he would view the text from a lay person's point of view.

POTENTIAL TOPICS

Any scientific topic, howsoever complicated or dull or hard it may look, could be written in a popular manner. At present, books on science projects, models and charts are much in demand because today these activities have become part of the school curriculum. Further, books on how things work, natural phenomena, day-to-day science jargon etc, are the need of the hour. Subjects such as archaeology, space, astronomy, dinosaurs, robots etc, are perennially in demand. There is also con-

siderable need to publish books on the history of science in India, the present science scenario, Indian scientists and inventors. In fact, there is at present almost a vacuum in the entire field of popular science writing for children. In order to encourage people to write science for children, the Department of Science & Technology has also introduced an award of Rs. 50,000, which is given annually on the Science Day. There are also a large number of awards for writing popular science books in Hindi. The Departments of Space, Environment, Science & Technology and Atomic Energy, have instituted these awards for writing popular books on their respective science fields. The prize money for these awards ranges from Rs. 3,000 to 10,000 and generally three prizes are given. The Central Hindi Directorate also entertains books on science in Hindi which, on meeting with its approval, are purchased in bulk, so that publishers are eager to publish them. In short, the boom in popular science writing is at hand.